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FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Are Red-headed Woodpeckers Moving West?—On June 7, 1915, the writer was surprised to see an adult male Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*) at Albuquerque, New Mexico. On February 2, 1916, another was seen at Roswell. The occurrence of this species in New Mexico was considered purely accidental until on August 28, 1917, J. S. Ligon reported five birds observed along the railway track between Socorro and Isleta. More recently Mr. Wm. Andrus saw one Red-head near Reserve, New Mexico, on the Tularosa River.

An examination of a map shows that most of these birds were seen on or near transcontinental railway lines, which strongly suggests that they crossed the plains by traveling along the lines of telegraph poles which follow the railroads. It is probably not unreasonable to hope that the Red-head will some day permanently extend its range westward to include New Mexico.—ALDO LEOPOLD, *Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 21, 1918.*

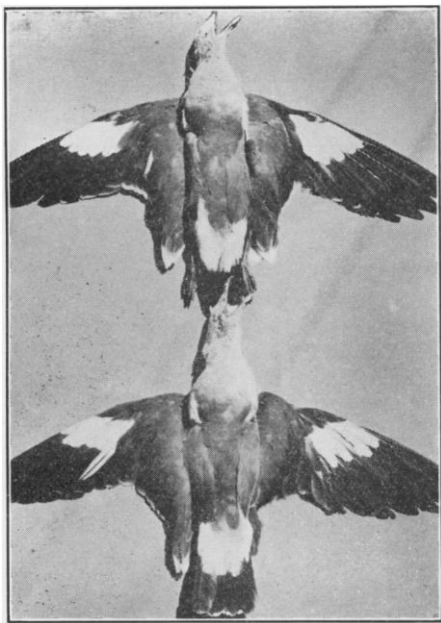


Fig. 21. SPECIMENS OF HEERMANN GULL
SHOWING WHITE PATCHES ON WINGS.

A Peculiarity of Plumage in Some Specimens of the Heermann Gull.

There are in the collection of the writer five specimens of Heermann Gull (*Larus heermanni*) in which the majority, or all, of the primary coverts are white (as shown in fig. 21). There is also a similar specimen in the collection of L. E. Wyman; and in the Museum of History, Science and Art, Los Angeles, is a bird having two white feathers in the primary coverts of one wing, the other wing being normal in coloration.

The above specimens were all taken along the Los Angeles County coast in winter. They are all adult birds, five of them being in fall plumage with grayish head, and the other in spring plumage with white head. Five of the six specimens are females. The comparative uniformity of marking in so many specimens would seem to indicate something more than a freak of albinism. For this reason the case seems worthy of record.—GEORGE WILLETT, *Los Angeles, California, March 17, 1918.*

Additional Records of European Widgeon in California.—The European Widgeon (*Mareca penelope*) occasionally takes a notion to wander along our Pacific Coast as a winter visitant and has been recorded in California several times, mostly quite a number of years ago. The most recent one of the half-dozen records given in Grinnell's *Distributional List* (Pacific Coast Avifauna no. 11) is 1904. A still more recent occurrence is that of a male taken in Merced County, by R. H. Beck on December 5, 1908, this specimen now being in the California Academy of Sciences. Also there is in the office of Drs. C. H. Bell and E. Pitres, of San Francisco, a mounted bird belonging to the Zindo Gun Club, of which these two gentlemen are members, which was shot at Norman, Glenn County, on December 19, 1917, by Mr. Samuel Pond, of San Francisco. This bird was most courteously loaned to me, a stranger to its owners, for examination and comparison, and proved to be a male European Widgeon in fine winter plumage that was complete in every detail except for a tuft of feathers of the post-nuptial stage still remaining among the under tail-coverts and which are in strong contrast to the remainder of the crissum.

Probably a number of individuals of this species have been shot at various times in the years gone by, but there are very few labelled specimens in museums or collectors' hands from this state. Most of those shot have been mistaken, as was the one taken by Mr. Pond, for a cross between an American Widgeon (Baldpate) and a Pintail or a Cinnamon Teal. The back of the male bird is a good deal like that of a Pintail, while the red of the head and neck resembles that of a Cinnamon Teal, with the rest of the bird closely approaching the American Widgeon, so that the idea of some such cross is naturally suggested to the mind of any one unfamiliar with the European Widgeon.—JOSEPH MAILLIARD, *San Francisco, February 9, 1918.*

Another Reference to Early Experiments in Keeping Hummingbirds in Captivity.—In THE CONDOR for September, 1917, p. 168, I called attention to the experiments made by Adolphe Boucard in San Francisco in 1852 in keeping hummingbirds in captivity. Boucard remained in San Francisco from August 16, 1851, to August 18, 1852, and then returned to France via Nicaragua and New York. He states that he collected many specimens of *Selasphorus rufus* and *Calypte anna*, that at one time he had as many as sixty of them alive, and that some of them lived four months.

With these facts in mind it is interesting to compare the following statement by Bonaparte in his "Notes sur les collections rapportées en 1853, par M. A. Delattre, de son voyage en Californie et dans le Nicaragua".

"M. Delattre has brought back from California, with their nests their eggs, and their young, two Hummingbirds, *Selasphorus ruber* Edw. [= *S. rufus*] and *S. anna* Lesson. By force of care he was able to keep in cages for seven or eight months a very large number of these delightful little beings which he had raised himself and on the habits of which he was able to make interesting observations which we shall not undertake to publish." (Comptes Rendus, xxxviii, April 3, 1854, p. 660.)

From other sources we learn that Delattre¹ left France in January, 1851, on a sailing vessel bound for California and that he reached San Francisco six months later (probably in August), after rounding Cape Horn. He returned via Nicaragua and reached home in the early part of 1853, and since he collected hummingbirds' nests, and eggs, he must have secured them in the spring of 1852, as he arrived in California after the season of 1851, and evidently left before the nesting season of 1853 in order to stop in Nicaragua and still reach Paris in the first half of that year.

It is very probable that the statements of Boucard and Bonaparte refer to the same or at least to simultaneous experiments. It is very unlikely that two French ornithologists should both conduct experiments in raising the same species of hummingbirds in San Francisco in 1852 and not know of each other's work. Boucard apparently does not mention Delattre, and the latter who never wrote very much, died shortly after his return, three months before Bonaparte's statement was published. When it is recalled that Boucard and Delattre both reached San Francisco by sailing vessel in August, 1851, and returned via the Nicaragua route in 1852, that Boucard was only a boy of 12 when he sailed and consequently rather young to undertake extended collections on his own initiative, while Delattre was an experienced collector 46 years of age, it seems more than likely that they were traveling together. In fact it is highly probable that on this, his first trip, Boucard was working under the direction of Delattre from whom possibly he acquired some of that interest in hummingbirds which became so marked in later years. If this surmise is correct it may throw some light on the region where Delattre collected in California. Boucard intimates that most of the year was spent in the neighborhood of San Francisco. That so experienced a collector of hummingbirds as Delattre secured nothing except *Selasphorus rufus* and *Calypte anna* indicates that he did not work in the mountains or in southern California, and the birds actually brought back could all have been obtained in the immediate vicinity of San Francisco or Monterey. Among other specimens collected was the type of *Passerculus alaudinus*. Under these circumstances it is perhaps reasonable to fix the type locality of this latter species as the vicinity of San Francisco Bay. Certainly the entire list of California birds obtained by Delattre should be re-examined critically in the hope of obtaining further light on the

¹Pierre Adolphe Delattre, often mentioned simply as "A. Delattre", was born in Tours, France, February 12, 1805, and died at Nice, France, January 3 1854, at the age of 49. He was an energetic explorer and traveling naturalist who devoted special attention to collecting hummingbirds. Between 1831 and 1851 he made several expeditions to America.

localities where the specimens were collected.—T. S. PALMER, *Washington, D. C., March 5, 1918.*

An Odd Nest of the Song Sparrow of Los Coronados Islands.—Many of the land birds inhabiting the islands off the coast of California have through long isolation acquired characteristics so pronounced as to warrant separation from the mainland forms. Not only has the plumage and the dimensions of the birds changed but their habits have been altered to conform to the new conditions of life.

During the past spring it was the writer's good fortune to be able to visit Los Coronados Islands, off the coast of Lower California, and to spend several days studying the habits of the nesting birds there. One of the most interesting was the local form of song sparrow, *Melospiza melodia clementae*.

There is no water to be found on any of the islands and but a scanty growth of vegetation growing from between the rocks on the steep slopes, surely a strange place to look for nests of the song sparrow. However, a number of the birds were seen and two nests located. One of these, on South Island, was three feet up in a small bush and



Fig. 22. NEST OF SONG SPARROW FROM LOS CORONADOS ISLANDS, IN WHICH FEATHERS OF VARIOUS SEABIRDS AND A SNAKE-SKIN HAVE ENTERED AS CONSTITUENT MATERIALS.

Photo by J. B. Dixon.

on May 5 held one egg. It was constructed of grass entirely and was quite similar to nests found on the mainland. The second nest was found on North Island and was certainly a strange affair, being constructed entirely of feathers and the skin of a lizard (see fig. 22).

This nest was found in the midst of the large colony of California Brown Pelicans and Western Gulls. It was built on the ground among the rocks, but was completely hidden by a small scrubby bush, very dense and lying flat and close to the earth. The parent bird betrayed her treasures; as I was carefully picking my way among the pelican and gull nests she hopped up through the bush only a few feet ahead of me and immediately ducked back into the identical spot from which she had emerged. Directly below the small opening in the bush was a large ball of feathers. This proved to be the nest and held three slightly incubated eggs.

It is the only nest of any species of song sparrow that the writer has ever seen which contained so much as one feather. It can truly be said that there is no accounting for individual tastes even among the sparrows.—NELSON K. CARPENTER, *Escondido, California, February 1, 1918.*

The Tragical Addition of a New Bird to the Campus List.—A dead bird or any part of one found in the woods or fields always suggests a story. It is true that the story, even when the bird can be identified, usually tells nothing more than this: That the species represented has occurred in or near the locality where its remains were found. This is not much, but it is something, especially when the bird is rare or hitherto unknown in that locality.

It is always interesting when the finding of a dead bird is attended by circumstances which suggest, in addition to the fact of the bird's occurrence where found, a real story, with action and human appeal and perhaps even a plot. Such a story is suggested by some remains of a Short-eared Owl, found in the Berkeley Hills and brought to the Museum, on two different dates, by two different people, and in two different manners and forms.

On the night of January 29, 1918, a Short-eared Owl was perched on a rock which crops from the steep gravelly north wall near the head of one of the two small tributary canyons lying between the mouths of Strawberry and Claremont canyons. This slope can be seen easily by anyone who walks up Haste Street and looks straight ahead of him. The axis of the canyon, if extended west, would almost coincide with Haste Street. The half-gravelly, half-rocky slope, or ledge, shows up plainly, for it is the only dirt-colored area in a canyon otherwise more or less intensely green with vegetation.

What time of night it was, or how long the owl had scanned the moonlit canyon from the high rock, we cannot say, but the bird's vigil was suddenly interrupted by a dark form swiftly bearing down on silent wings. We can imagine that the Short-eared Owl quickly crouched, as startled birds do before springing into the air. But it had barely spread its wings before the dark form had pounced upon it and crunched it into a gravelly crevice of the ledge. It fought upward with its talons, cat-like; but, if it was a cat, its antagonist was a tiger, with talons that were longer and stronger. For a few moments there was a lively tussle and a great beating of soft wings on rocks; feathers were torn from the smaller bird and strewn over the ground; then the talons of the Horned Owl closed on the breast of the Short-eared, at once piercing the vitals and squeezing out the breath,—and the struggle was over.

The Horned Owl, bearing the body of its victim in its claws, flew across the canyon, probably in a southerly direction, toward the grove of eucalyptus trees back of the State School for the Deaf and Blind. Here it engaged in a cannibalistic orgy, devouring the breast and other portions of its slain relative, and not caring how many of the bones and feathers it swallowed with the flesh.

The next morning (January 30), the Horned Owl, still gorged, and made stupid by sunlight, was sleeping in the foliage of a live oak or eucalyptus, near the scene of its feast, when a man (or a boy) with a shot-gun passed. The owl flushed, and the man (or boy) took a wing shot at it. Though wounded, its momentum carried it some distance from the gunner, who hunted for the body awhile and then gave up his search.

That is the story as reconstructed from the evidence brought to hand at the Museum. The reader, after hearing the evidence, is at liberty to judge whether the story seems, at least in its main essentials, reasonable.

On the afternoon of January 30, a member of the Museum staff, while strolling around the small canyon already described, spied some feathers near the rock already described, and, clambering up, collected all of the larger and some of the smaller ones. Among these were five primaries (three from the left, two from the right, wing), and one secondary (from the left wing). What would amount to a good handful of small downy breast feathers he left scattered, as found, over the ledge. Some of these were blood-spattered, or torn out with bits of skin adhering to their roots. The quills of two larger feathers were crushed and split. At the Museum he compared the feathers with feathers on study specimens and thus proved they had come from a Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*).

These feathers constituted the first installment of Short-eared Owl remains to arrive at the Museum. The second installment arrived five days later, in the stomach of a Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus pacificus*). On February 4, Miss Elizabeth Van E. Ferguson, while walking in "the Berkeley Hills near the Blind Asylum", found a dead Horned Owl, which she retrieved and brought to the Museum. Dr. Bryant, who examined the stomach, found that certain dark wet masses therefrom, when dried and fluffed out,

resolved themselves into the feathers of a Short-eared Owl. The close correspondence between the localities where the wing-feathers, and the dead Horned Owl, respectively, were found, immediately linked up in a suggestive manner two events hitherto not guessed to be related. Thereupon, Mr. Swarth, who skinned the Horned Owl, testified that it had already been dead from two to four days when found, and thereby proved a correspondence between the two circumstances in *date* as well. From these facts and clues, from other evidence (such as the finding by Mr. Swarth of shot in the body of the owl), and from a study of the canyon and an elimination of certain events that probably did not happen, has been constructed the story of what well might have and probably *did* happen.

This much at least is positive: A Short-eared Owl has occurred on or near the Campus—which is interesting because this owl has not previously been recorded as a Campus bird.—RICHARD HUNT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, Berkeley, California, March 5, 1918.*

Nesting Notes from the San Bernardino Valley.—A nest with five eggs of the Rock Wren (*Salpinctes obsoletus*) was taken in Colton, California, on March 15, 1917. The weather was unusually cold in January, February and March, 1917; yet this is the earliest instance that I have noticed.

On July 4, 1917, I found a Pasadena Thrasher (*Toxostoma redivivum pasadenense*) incubating three eggs. Apparently incubation was advanced. Several days later when I visited the nest I was sorry to find that the eggs had been destroyed. These birds nest early and this is, by far, the latest record that I have.—W. C. HANNA, *Colton, California, February 15, 1918.*

The Salton Sink Song Sparrow at Oro Grande, California.—I spent two days, February 17 and 18, 1918, collecting at Oro Grande, near Victorville on the Mohave Desert, San Bernardino County, California. Nine Song Sparrows were taken, six of which were the San Diego (*Melospiza melodia cooperi*), two were the Modoc (*Melospiza melodia fisherella*), and one was the Salton Sink (*Melospiza melodia saltonis*). To quote Mr. J. Grinnell, who has examined the specimens, "the *saltonis* is of particular interest as it seems to be our first known occurrence of this species north of the Colorado desert, probably a winter straggler. Only *cooperi* has been known to breed along the Mohave River." —WRIGHT M. PIERCE, *Claremont, California, March 4, 1918.*

A Surprising Trait in the Black-necked Stilt.—One who has observed the Black-necked Stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*) in the field or who has considered its extreme specialization as a wader would scarcely suspect it of much ability as a diver, yet it has such ability to no little degree. While collecting at Nigger Slough, in the vicinity of Los Angeles, this spring, I brought down a male Stilt from a flock overhead. The bird, with the tip of one wing injured, came down into open water some eighteen inches in depth. It repeatedly tried to escape by diving. These efforts were watched with much interest on my part, and a fairly good view of the performance was obtained. The wings were used in making progress but the position of the feet was not learned. The injured wing tip was an apparent handicap and the bird did not remain below very well. A distance of some four or five feet was the longest dive made. The adult bird must have practically no use for such an accomplishment in a state of nature. Is it a diver when in its infancy? Is this a juvenal character persisting in the adult but coming to the surface only under unusual stress?—LOYE MILLER, *State Normal School, Los Angeles, California, May 9, 1918.*

Wood Ibis at San Diego.—A pair of Wood Ibises (*Mycteria americana*), male and female presumably, which I first observed on March 17, 1918, were here for over one month, and, if they have not been shot, may still be in the vicinity. I never before saw an Ibis here so early. These birds apparently were mated, as they always remained close together when feeding or flying. I have not seen them myself since April 17, but have heard of one being seen lately. My previous earliest record for the species was June 29, 1915, when six appeared and were promptly shot by local gunners, to be left where they fell. It is a pity that the game laws are not recognized to any extent in San Diego city and county by such a large percentage of gunners.—HENRY GREY, *San Diego, California, May 1, 1918.*

Evidence on the Food of Hawks and Owls in California.—Most questions as to the food of hawks and owls can be answered by reference to A. K. Fisher's "The Hawks and Owls of the United States in their Relation to Agriculture" (U. S. Dept. Agric., Div. Ornithology and Mammology, Bull. 3, 1893). In this volume are to be found 210 pages of

information, and reports on the contents of 2690 stomachs of hawks and owls. Unfortunately, as was inevitable at the time, few of the birds examined as a basis of this work were secured in California or even in western states. Such widely different conditions exist in the eastern and western portions of the United States that the use of eastern data does not allow of more than an inference as to the food habits of western birds. In that no actual evidence as to the food of the Marsh Hawk, Ferruginous Rough-leg, Sharp-shinned Hawk and Pigmy Owl in California is contained in the above cited standard work and but slight evidence of the California food of other hawks and owls, the following results of stomach examinations are worth while recording. Additional reports of this kind would more clearly establish the economic value of many of the raptors. Our skeptical ranchers are more interested in what a bird eats in California than in what is consumed by the same species in the eastern states.

TABLE SHOWING STOMACH CONTENTS

Numbers in first column are the serial numbers of the stomachs as preserved in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.			
No. Sex	Locality	Collector	Stomach contents
1 ♂	Torrance, Los Angeles Co., Calif.	A. E. Colburn	pts. (mostly hair) San Diego cottontail
2 ?	Near Corona, Riverside Co.	W. M. Pierce	pts. 1 skink (<i>Plestiodon skiltonianum</i>).
1 ♂	Los Angeles	A. E. Colburn	pts. 1 beetle (<i>Eledus</i> sp.).
1 ♀	Chino, San Bernardino Co.	W. M. Pierce	pts. 1 pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae pallascens</i>).
1 ♂	Laytonville, Mendocino Co.	F. C. Clarke	pts. 1 pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae pallascens</i>).
1 ♀	Laytonville, Mendocino Co.	F. C. Clarke	wings and feathers of meadowlark (<i>Sturnella neglecta</i>).
1 ♀	Laytonville, Mendocino Co.	F. C. Clarke	pts. of wing and flesh of sparrow (probably <i>Zonotrichia</i>).
1 ?	Los Angeles Co.	A. E. Colburn	15 black crickets (<i>Gryllus</i> sp.); pts. of same.
2 ♀	La Grange, Stanislaus Co.	J. Dixon	pts. 1 white-footed mouse (<i>Peromyscus maniculatus gambelii</i>); pts. 3 Jerusalem crickets (<i>Sternopneustes irregularis</i>); 1 cricket (<i>Gryllus</i> sp.).
3 ♂ juv.	Mt. Diablo, Contra Costa Co.	T. I. Storer	pts. 5 grasshoppers (<i>Melanoplus devastator</i>).
2 ♀	Los Angeles	A. E. Colburn	1 pocket gopher (<i>Thomomys bottae</i>).
3 ?	Los Angeles	A. E. Colburn	pts. (few bones, mostly flesh) 1 brush rabbit (<i>Sylvilagus bachmani cinereus</i>).
4 ♀	Los Angeles Co.	A. E. Colburn	pts. (vertebrae and hair) jackrabbit (<i>Lepus californicus bennetti</i>).
5 ♀	Los Angeles Co.	A. E. Colburn	pts. 1 brush rabbit (<i>Sylvilagus bachmani cinereus</i>).
1 ♂	Santa Ana River, near Corona, Riverside Co.	W. M. Pierce	bones and hair of 1 field mouse (<i>Microtus californicus</i>).
1 ♂	Walnut Creek, Contra Costa Co.	W. P. Taylor	1 Jerusalem cricket (<i>Sternopneustes irregularis</i>).
2 ♀	Kings River Canyon, Fresno Co.	H. G. White	pts. 4 long-legged grasshoppers (<i>Climopleura melanophora</i>); also eggs of same.
1 ♀	Berkeley, Alameda Co.	E. Van E. Ferguson	feathers and bones of short-eared owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>).
1 ♂	Kings River Canyon, Fresno Co.	J. Dixon	1 grasshopper (<i>Melanoplus devastator</i> ?).

—HAROLD C. BRYANT, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, February 5, 1918.*